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S E C R E T DUBLIN 000254

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SUBJECT: IRELAND IS UNDECIDED ON HIZBALLAH DESIGNATION,
REQUESTS WRITTEN INFORMATION

REF: STATE 34900

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF MARY DALY,
FOR REASONS 1.4 (B), (D)

1. (S) Summary. In a March 1 demarche, DFA said that it remained undecided on whether to support designation of Hizballah. "At first glance," DFA said, the information emboffs provided fell short of a "smoking gun." Moreover, DFA expressed concern that verbal information might not satisfy the evidentiary standards required for Clearinghouse discussions. End Summary.

2. (S) On March 1, Emboffs delivered reftel demarche to Maurice Biggar, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) First Secretary, UN Desk for Terrorism and Illicit Drugs, Gerard

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Keown, DFA European Correspondent, and Stephen Dawson, DFA Deputy Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa. The DFA officials said that GOI remained "undecided" on whether to support designation of Hizballah. "At first glance," DFA said, the information that emboffs provided fell short of a "smoking gun." Dawson said that the demarche information was helpful and more substantive than in previous demarches, but not as useful as would be the case with written copies for review and circulation. Dawson told emboffs that reliance on hastily handwritten notes from the demarche would make it difficult for the GOI to conduct inter-agency deliberations on Hizballah's designation.

3. (S) Biggar, who will represent the GOI at the EU Clearinghouse on March 16, also expressed concern that verbal information might not satisfy the evidentiary standards required for Clearinghouse discussions. He interpreted Common Position (CP) 931 (para four) and Clearinghouse standard procedures as requiring written submissions. Biggar added that this technicality might lead Member States to rule the U.S. submissions out of order in the Clearinghouse. Biggar held to this view when Emboffs pointed out that CP 931 required "precise information," as opposed to written submissions. He said that the GOI was accustomed during its EU Presidency last year to receive written submissions directly and to circulate them in advance among Member States. Biggar and Dawson also noted distinctions among the types of allegations made in the U.S. submission, as some were legal in nature, while others appeared to be politically or intelligence-related. They said that not having a written record of these distinctions would make it harder for them to deliberate among themselves and later with EU colleagues at the Clearinghouse.

4. (S) Emboffs asked which direction the GOI was leaning in terms of designating Hizballah. Biggar responded that since procedural obstacles at the February Clearinghouse had precluded substantive discussion of the designation, Ireland was not in a position to say whether it was leaning toward a yes or no vote. Dawson said that, at first glance, the information provided in the demarche was not conclusive. For follow-up discussions on the designation, Dawson also recommended clarification of the USG sources cited in the demarche, for example, whether the reference was to Embassy reporting. The DFA representatives said they had no obstacle in principle against voting for Hizballah's designation, but they were determined to base their vote on concrete evidence presented in a manner that was procedurally sound.

5. (S) Dawson asked why the United States was pushing for the designation at this time. He noted some of the information provided in the demarche was several years old. Moreover, Lebanon had become politically fragile while the Middle East Peace Process was entering a sensitive juncture. Emboffs replied that it is not useful to frame the matter in a political context; the issue at stake was Irish support for the designation of Hizballah as a terrorist group. Dawson conceded that politics were not the heart of the matter, but again questioned the timing of the demarche in light of recent political developments.

6. (C) Comment: Reftel was clear about not leaving any paper during the demarche, but Post wishes to suggest consideration of flexibility on this point. If it remains impossible to deliver written information, Post would appreciate talking points on meeting evidentiary standards, which we could provide to DFA as follow-up. End Comment.

